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**U.S. MILITARY INVOLVEMENT  
IN THE BALKANS:  
In what interest...At what cost?**

BY

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U.S. MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE BALKANS:

In what interest...At what cost?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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# ABSTRACT

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## U.S. MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE BALKANS

In what interest...At what cost?

The political disintegration of Yugoslavia which began in the summer of 1991 was no real surprise to the diplomatic world. The subsequent outbreak of violence in and among the successor states, however, and its rapid degeneration into ugly ethnic conflict has horrified the world. Moral outrage against policies of "ethnic cleansing," attacks and sieges against civilian populations, wholesale removal of civilian populations, and allegations of concentration or death camps has pricked the conscience of the United States. Many now demand decisive military action be taken, including the commitment of U.S. ground forces.

Beyond moral outrage, there are other reasons why the United States is urged to take military action. There is considerable fear that the conflict may "spill over" into other countries, upsetting political and economic stability throughout Europe. The antithetical interests of Greece and Turkey in the conflict further threaten NATO. Additionally, a dangerous precedent is set by inactivity, because a successful pogrom in Bosnia may inspire bullies elsewhere in Europe to adopt the same tactics. In short, the Balkans are, as in previous times, a powder keg.

It has become clear that only the United States can exert the leadership required to bring about a concerted world response to the fighting in Bosnia. Failure of the United States to react to the atrocities and sufferings of the war implies that the United States has forfeited its moral and political leadership,

or is powerless to influence the situation.

#### THE BALKAN CAULDRON

Yugoslavia straddled the geopolitical fault line between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, and its six constituent republics and two autonomous provinces had vastly different historical, religious, and cultural traditions and experiences.<sup>1</sup> A map showing the distribution of nationalities in Yugoslavia closely resembles a patchwork quilt. With one exception, Slovenia, each of the republics had sizeable minority populations.

The collapse of communism in Europe fueled the internal nationalist turmoil in Yugoslavia which had simmered below the surface for over forty years under centralized communist rule. Elections in 1990 brought non-communists to power in Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, while renamed communists draped in the mantle of chauvinistic nationalism retained power in Serbia and Montenegro. Serbia and Montenegro wished the federal republic to retain or even increase federal power, while Slovenia and Croatia, long disliking Serbian domination of a centralized state, wished to weaken the federal state.

#### The Spark

On 25 June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. Two days later, the Serb-dominated Yugoslav armed forces (JNA) attacked the Slovenian militia. By late July, conflict had broken out in Croatia, where ethnic Serbs, particularly in the Krajina province of Croatia, were determined

to break away from the Croatian state, where they would be a decided minority. JNA forces actively fought Croatian militia forces and provided support to Croatian Serbs in their struggle. International recognition of the two breakaway republics did not come until January 1992, under heavy German prodding. Slovenia's territorial integrity was intact, the JNA having withdrawn, but over a third of the territory of Croatia was under the control of Serbs.

Bosnia-Herzegovina had petitioned the European Community (EC) in December 1991 for recognition as an independent state. At the same time, Bosnian Serbs stated their desire to remain within the current Yugoslav state, or if Bosnia proclaimed its independence, to seek an independent Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The EC required Bosnia to hold a referendum on independence, and despite a Serb boycott, over 60 per cent of the electorate voted for independence. This sparked scattered violence in the country, and by the time Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognized by most major world powers in early April 1992, fighting had spread. The JNA actively supported the Serb militia forces against Bosnia's territorial defense forces, even providing air support. By September, Bosnian Serbs controlled over seventy per cent of their country.

The only former Yugoslav republic not involved to date in the fighting is Macedonia. Macedonia also applied to the EC for recognition in late 1991, but due to intransigent Greek opposition to the use of Macedonia in the name of the new state,

recognition by most western countries came only in April 1993.

#### Fuel for the Fire

As horrific as the conflict has been to date, there is potential for even greater violence and bloodshed. Serbia has several regions which may erupt into conflict. In the north is the Serbian province of Vojvodina, which has been stripped by Serbia of the autonomous status granted it by the federal Yugoslav government earlier. There is a sizeable Hungarian minority of about 400,000 in the province, and relations are strained by the unwillingness of ethnic Hungarians to fight for the Serbs against the Slovenes and Croats, as well as by the increasing number of Serbian refugees arriving in the region from Croatia and Bosnia.<sup>2</sup>

Straddling the border between Serbia and Montenegro is the Sandzak, whose 450,000 inhabitants include 225,000 Muslims. The Sandzak also borders Bosnia and Kosovo, inviting the spread of any anti-Muslim activity. The Muslims here regard the Serbian government as oppressive, and seek autonomy or independence, neither of which had been granted by the federal Yugoslav government.<sup>3</sup>

In the south of Serbia is Kosovo, the heart of medieval Serbia. Kosovo was also an autonomous province in federal Yugoslavia, but in 1990 Milosevic ended its status and made it a Serbian province governed from Belgrade. Kosovo is heavily populated by ethnic Albanians, whose almost two million make up 90 per cent of the province's inhabitants. Serbian repression in



Kosovo is widespread, but Albanian resistance is resilient, albeit largely clandestine and peaceful. The Albanians have conducted referendums which have overwhelmingly supported the creation of an independent state, and have set up a "shadow" government and an underground civil support system.<sup>4</sup>

Macedonia is also a multi-ethnic state, comprised of a Slav Macedonian majority living in the eastern and central portion of the country, a large (about 600,000, or nearly 30 per cent of the population) ethnic Albanian minority who lives in the western crescent of the country, and a smaller (100,000) Turkish minority who lives in the center of Macedonia. There is considerable friction between the Slavs and the ethnic Albanians, with the latter demanding territorial autonomy for Albanians in Macedonia.<sup>5</sup>

#### The Stakes of External Actors

The former Yugoslavia was a microcosm of the Balkans, a region described as "a mosaic of numerous national and religious, economical and political, geopolitical and strategic controversies and differences that assume the character of both local and regional conflicts."<sup>6</sup> The conflict in Yugoslavia has both inflamed and supplemented these controversies and differences. Almost every country in the Balkans has some stake in the Yugoslav conflict, which threatens both to involve that country directly in the conflict and drag yet another along with it. This web of interests likewise complicates external intervention by international organizations.

Albania borders Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia. The large Albanian population in Kosovo and a sizeable minority (30 per cent) in Macedonia gives Albania a direct stake in the treatment of ethnic Albanians in these areas. Albania is not equipped economically or militarily to fight Serbia, and although Albanian officials have adopted a milder position on the treatment of Albanians in Kosovo, Albania would probably be unable to avoid being dragged into an open conflict in either Kosovo or Macedonia.<sup>7</sup>

Hungary shares a 600-kilometer border with Slovenia, Croatia, and the Vojvodina province of Serbia. Hungary has obvious concerns for the rights of the 400,000 ethnic Hungarians who live in Vojvodina, and the Hungarian prime minister has even gone so far as to speak of assuming "spiritual" leadership of Hungarian minorities living in neighboring countries." With over 100,000 Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes living within her own borders, Hungary has considerable interest in preventing any spillover of violence.<sup>9</sup> Serbs have routinely violated Hungarian airspace, and relations are strained.

Romania borders Serbia on the north, and has traditionally enjoyed close economic ties to Serbia, primarily petroleum exports. Romania has only a small ethnic minority residing in Vojvodina, but a substantial Hungarian minority resides in the Transylvania region of Romania, and any trouble in Vojvodina with ethnic Hungarians might spill over into Transylvania and threaten Romanian territorial integrity. Romania remains an autocratic,

centrist state, so it perhaps considers Serbia less of a pariah than other countries and would view any democratization moves in the region as potentially destabilizing to its own regime.<sup>10</sup> EC sanctions against Serbia have harmed Romania's economic interests, further weakening the government.

Bulgaria shares borders with Serbia and Macedonia. There is a small ethnic Bulgarian minority in Serbia, but to date there has been no trouble. Bulgaria's ethnic relationship to Macedonia is especially close; most Bulgarians consider Macedonia to be western Bulgaria. Medieval Bulgaria included Macedonia, and the Macedonian language is basically Bulgarian. Bulgaria has recognized the independence of all four former Yugoslav republics, although it recognized a Macedonian state, not a Macedonian nation. Bulgaria also has a large ethnic Turk minority, and any destabilisation in Serbia or Macedonia which might invite Turkish intervention on behalf of the Islamic minorities could stir up ethnic problems in Bulgaria.<sup>11</sup>

Greece borders Macedonia and Albania, but relations with both are strained. Greece objects to the use of the name Macedonia by its new neighbor, claiming that the original Macedonian nation was Greek. Greece has enjoyed close ties with Serbia, which depends heavily on the Greek port of Salonika. A large portion of Greece's trade with the EC passed through Belgrade as well.

Turkey borders only Greece and Bulgaria, but Turkish and Islamic minorities throughout the region ensure Turkish interest

and potential involvement in any crises. In addition, migrations from Bosnia to Turkey during the last century have resulted in over two million people of Bosnian Muslim origin living in Turkey.<sup>12</sup> Bosnian Muslims have already sought help from Turkey, and any indication that the conflict has degenerated into a religious one could be the spark to Turkey's involvement.

Perhaps the largest question mark involving the interests of an outside power is that regarding Russia and its historic Serb-Russia pan-Slavic tie. Russia reluctantly supported United Nations sanctions against Serbia in May 1992 and voted with the CSCE in July 1992 to condemn the rump Yugoslav federation for its part in the Balkan conflict, but recently has shifted back to its historic pro-Serbian inclinations. The Russians have made it clear they will not support military actions against Serbia, and are balking at tighter economic sanctions against Serbia.<sup>13</sup> As one *Pravda* commentator warned,

Punishment [for Serbia and Montenegro] is now being arranged under the UN flag. But what will happen tomorrow? If one day Russia stands up in earnest for a Russian-speaking population somewhere in the CIS, they will punish us, too. Then people in Belgrade will say with good reason: "We warned you."<sup>14</sup>

Russia will make no international move which might threaten its own internal reforms, but it also will not likely betray an historic ally.

#### U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE BALKANS

U. S. national interests in the Balkans are clearly not first order. There is no threat to U.S. national survival, and

no direct threat to U.S. vital interests, citizens, or trade. However, the United States does have considerable economic and security interests in Europe, and for that reason it has a definite interest in preventing chaos induced by political instability in a region with a history of sparking wider wars. Furthermore, the United States has an interest in promoting international respect for basic human rights and deterring crimes against humanity, as well as assuring the world and European community of enlightened, concerned, and responsible American leadership.

#### Stability of Europe

Given the twentieth century history of Europe, it is not altogether certain that "Europe's peace has become a divisible peace."<sup>15</sup> Insofar as the violence among the Yugoslav successor states threatens to undermine the stability of the whole region by drawing other states into the conflict or sparking ethnic unrest in other states, legitimate U.S. interests are at stake.<sup>16</sup>

Any scenario in the Balkans which would bring Turkey or Greece into the conflict is especially serious, because of the erosive effect on NATO. Not only would two members find themselves at war with each other, but other member nations would find relations with both countries strained or broken. Turkey is a critical member of the alliance now, given its strategic location on the border of several CIS countries and its moderate leadership in the Muslim world.

Some observers argue that inactivity on the part of the world community has effectively legitimized the "violent demise of a member of the United Nations and of the Conference on European Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE),"<sup>17</sup> and accepts "that borders can be redrawn by force in post-cold-war Europe."<sup>18</sup> This is a serious concern in Europe, given the number of newly independent countries who face a myriad of political, economic, and social problems. There are several countries in Europe and the CIS in which revisionist chauvinistic regimes could spark internal conflicts which could rapidly spread outside national borders. In the case of Russia, subject as it is to the same disintegrative factors which destroyed Yugoslavia, its historic link to Serbia magnifies the threat. If these regimes, or their political opposition, are not deterred by a credible threat of response by the rest of the world to the flouting of international law and convention, then it is only a matter of time until the current conflict expands or new ones erupt.

Another threat to the stability of the region is the fear that peace settlements made after previous wars might now be contested. Hungary has hinted that the demise of Yugoslavia may void the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, which set the present boundary between Hungary and Yugoslavia.<sup>19</sup> Hungary lost substantial territory to Yugoslavia in that treaty, and a sizeable Hungarian population remains in those territories.

The refugees of the Yugoslav war, now estimated in excess of 2.5 million, are another time bomb threatening European

stability. The great majority still reside within the borders of the successor states, but many have fled to neighboring countries. International agencies and national governments have been pushed to the limit in providing housing, food, and medical care for these refugees, and in some cases borders have been closed to refugees and local animosities have flared. The refugee issue will likely linger long after the fighting ceases, and may continue to strain or disrupt domestic and international relations. Refugees often fuel chauvinistic response in fringe groups and parties, further disrupting domestic political affairs.

Despite the threats to stability which exist, the reality is that the threat to U.S. interests is still more potential than actual. The emphasis is still on what *might* occur if. The fact that other European states have not intervened to stop the fighting is recognition that they feel at least somewhat insulated from the conflict. Any U.S. actions should weigh heavily on deterrence, and avoid entanglement or entrapment.

#### Moral Imperatives

Coincident with the emergence of a global focus by American leaders on a new world order characterized by the notable absence of a threat of nuclear annihilation is a fresh emphasis on the moral element of foreign policy. Interventionism has lost the stigma it has long borne, and through the addition of adjectives such as "humanitarian" has even achieved a noble character. In the case of Bosnia, claims are now made that humanitarian

intervention is justified based on moral principles and international standards of justice. This legalistic-moralistic approach is becoming increasingly strident in its call for decisive action, arguing that "the international community has a compelling legal right and moral obligation to defend the civilian victims...not merely to provide them with minimal humanitarian assistance."<sup>20</sup>

Despite international conventions and declarations (e.g., Genocide Convention, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Charter, and the Helsinki Final Act of 1975) which condemn or outlaw abhorrent behavior, and to which most states subscribe, arguments for intervention are normally overpowered by arguments on behalf of national sovereignty. The new moral interventionists reject this traditional response, and posit that "once it is established that international standards of human rights are being violated, the right to impose such standards should prevail over assertions of national sovereignty."<sup>21</sup> The result is that "sovereignty is no longer a tool for creating international order, but a 'political restraint' on international action."<sup>22</sup>

Adherents of the new interventionism include "some of the same folks who resisted action against Communist tyranny for three decades, warning against intervention in the internal affairs of other states,"<sup>23</sup> who "now tell us we are morally defective if we refrain."<sup>24</sup> Yesterday's peace marchers are today's Marines.<sup>25</sup> More attention appears to be paid to the



character of the involvement as opposed to the cost, both political and militarily. There are certainly elements of Wilsonian idealism present in the new interventionism, creating ambitious ends for a foreign policy being forged in an environment of shrinking national power, particularly military power.

The UN-sanctioned, armed humanitarian intervention by the U.S. into Somalia does not challenge the sovereignty of that nation only because of its chaotic domestic situation. However, the expedition has considerably enlarged the prospective scope of humanitarian intervention operations. There is an urgent and obvious need for the world community to clarify and codify standards and guidelines for humanitarian intervention.

Under what precise criteria should humanitarian intervention be taken? To feed starving children? To restore law, order, and political stability? To protect democracy?...At what point does permissible humanitarian intervention become impermissible aggression? Should human rights deprivations be measured according to Western standards and values?<sup>26</sup>

Given the absence of such guidelines, moral interventionists are virtually unfettered.

Even if humanitarian intervention is defined in a narrow manner, it is likely that there will be far more situations justifying intervention than there will be means to pursue. This will force selective intervention, which will be open to charges of hypocrisy, cowardice, neglect, or self-interest.<sup>27</sup> In the long run, the legitimacy of the intervention by the intervening nation or international institution may be undermined by

perceptions of the presence of any of these elements in the intervention selection process.

#### The Exercise of U.S. Leadership

At the beginning of the Yugoslav conflict, the U.S. deferred leadership and action to the Europeans, who requested it. The CSCE, WEU, and EC all made efforts, but were unsuccessful in stopping the fighting or deterring acts of genocide. None of these organizations had either the experience or the political and diplomatic architecture necessary to achieve results, particularly given national responses to the crisis ranging from apathy and indifference to alarmist. With Europe's failure, the world turned expectantly to the United States. As one German commentator noted, "...together with the Gulf War, the Balkan tragedy spells out a sobering message: if the United States leads, action follows; if it does not, little of consequence happens."<sup>28</sup>

The United States should be somewhat heartened by the European failure, since it underlines the unique leadership role the U.S. now exercises in the world. The United States can shape world response to crises with limited expenditure of resources. Leadership allows the United States to determine its own participation, often limiting it to the obvious command, control, intelligence, and logistics functions which ensure sizeable numbers of troops, but limited direct combatants.

Inasmuch as there are no direct threats to United States national survival, and other nations of the world share the same

broad interests of a stable and secure world, particularly the European democracies, the United States can exercise leadership through international organizations and collective action. In the Balkans, the United Nations is an appropriate forum for the U.S. to use, because the Islamic aspect of the conflict requires a certain sensitivity which might be missing or muted in a purely European forum.

#### MILITARY INVOLVEMENT

National interests must be translated into achievable political objectives; appropriate economic, diplomatic, and/or military strategies to achieve these objectives must be developed; and finally these strategies must be allocated the required resources. Commitment of resources will be influenced greatly by the national interest at stake, as well as by the depth of national will or resolve.

A coherent military strategy comprises ends (objectives), ways (courses of action), and means (resources). If military force is to be used, it is absolutely imperative for the political objective to be clear and unambiguous, as well as achievable by military force. Military objectives must contribute to achieving the political objective, and the courses of action selected must be in consonance with the overall national strategy. Clausewitz's dictum on the resort to war applies equally to any application of military force:

No one starts a war - or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so - without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to

conduct it...This is the governing principle which will set its course, prescribe the scale of means and effort which is required, and make its influence felt throughout down to the smallest operational detail.<sup>29</sup>

Any decision to commit United States forces to the war in Bosnia should meet the stringency of this test.

#### Ends

Given the national interests discussed earlier, there are at least four major political objectives guiding U.S. policy in the Balkans: prevent the spread of the fighting, stop "ethnic cleansing" and related atrocities, deliver humanitarian aid to besieged populations, and exercise leadership of a collective world response. These political objectives do not necessarily require the commitment of military forces, but prescient planners would do well to prepare a range of military options to supplement the political and diplomatic efforts already underway.

Translating these political objectives into specific military objectives is not easy. Preventing the fighting from spreading to other countries does not just mean contain the fighting within the current geographical boundaries. It means implicitly to prevent fighting from escalating internally as well, e.g., in Kosovo, so that external actors do not intervene. Without access to the territory of Kosovo itself, a strategy of defense is impossible and only a strategy of deterrence can be employed.

Stop ethnic cleansing is a pungent political war cry, but it is a vague military objective. "Ethnic cleansing" is in reality

a tactic employed by armed forces to clear lands of their inhabitants through killing or driving off. The intervention of U.S. forces cannot prevent such a tactic from being pursued by enemy forces except by providing a military defense of the territory in question.

It is important to emphasize the danger of formulating policies and objectives which are controlled by public opinion and not by national interests. In this age where the media brings world tragedy into the living room, it is well to remember that public passions can be easily aroused. Boutros Boutros Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, warned of this at the London Conference on Yugoslavia in September 1992: "For the present and the future, we must not now allow our priorities to be set, nor our emotions calibrated, by the extent of media coverage which a given crisis generates."<sup>30</sup> National interests should be the bedrock of our national policies. Policies which proceed from passion risk being undermined when those passions flag or shift.

The fact that the United States would not intervene unilaterally in Bosnia, but would do so as part of a United Nations force, does not remove the requirement to define political objectives and translate these into clear military objectives. In fact, the process will be more difficult, because the lowest commonly agreed upon interest may well have to be so vaguely defined or expressed in order to achieve political consensus, that translation into an achievable military objective

may be nearly impossible.

#### Ways

The heart of the spillover threat of the conflict is Serbian violence in Kosovo, Vojvodina, or the Sandjak. The U.S. has warned Serbia that such a move into Kosovo would elicit a military response. Such an intervention would be armed humanitarian intervention, not response to international aggression, since those areas are all inside Serbia's borders. The specific military objective to be pursued is not obvious, particularly if the United Nations or the United States reacts slowly. Would forces attack into Kosovo to "liberate" the province, merely come to the rescue of besieged cities, or counter-attack into Serbia to obtain independence?

The stark military reality is that if a Serbian attack is not met promptly, subsequent military action by U.N. or U.S. forces will fall into the "too hard to do" box. Air power may be used to punish the aggressors, and those civilian populations lying too close, but ground forces would be required to eject them. Such punishment is really a failure of deterrence.

The military policy most likely to prevent the spread of the fighting is a stark political warning coupled with a credible deterrent military force. The U.S. should coordinate a collective immediate reaction force (IRF) composed primarily of American and European forces, predesignated and on alert in their home countries. An appropriate NATO headquarters should be designated as the command element, and should publish a

contingency plan which would target Serbian as well as provincial political and territorial objectives. Serbia should be put on notice the behavior which would warrant commitment of the force, and the minimum punishment to be meted out or reparation to be extracted for improper conduct. At a minimum, any attack on a province would be grounds for international recognition of the independence of that province, and the immediate justification of intervention by international forces as response to international aggression. Such a clear, visible manifestation of political will and military might would go far in bolstering the credibility of international demands on Serbia.

The objective of stopping "ethnic cleansing" and other atrocities would be easier to achieve given the existence of an international IRF capable of intervening to punish the aggressor. The execution of a Son Tai style rescue mission by U.N. sponsored forces, in which prisoners and guards were extracted, would be a significant international move against war crimes criminals. A war crimes tribunal could be immediately convened and trials commenced. The threat of subsequent missions should be explicit, and might well lead to the elimination of all such camps.

The more specific and seemingly less interventionist political objective of delivering humanitarian aid to besieged populations may well be the most difficult objective to achieve. The courses of action likely to be adopted would require either too few, and non-threatening, military forces to achieve an acceptable minimum of aid (i.e., air dropping humanitarian

supplies), or far too many, and vulnerable, forces (i.e., providing safe passage of humanitarian convoys). Of course, if our real national interests require only a palliative for the American public conscience, the acceptable minimum may well be achieved.

There was probably a time when the United States could have taken a leadership role in trying to solve the Balkan crisis without having had to provide troops. Given the presence of thousands of European forces on the ground as peacekeepers, the United States must provide military forces to meet the ante. But the United States should weigh in with those forces and capabilities only it can provide: intelligence gathering assets, command and control capabilities, and logistic planners and forces. Even so, it is probable that at least a token infantry force will have to be committed now to prove U.S. willingness to accept a fair share of the risk faced by the front line soldier.

All military courses of action are hampered by the realities of the type of conflict and the terrain. The rules of engagement will be difficult to draft -- when can forces respond with the use of deadly force? There is no identifiable military front; the whole nation is a war zone, with local commanders exercising what command and control exists over local defense forces. There are numerous irregular forces operating throughout the country, greatly compounding the problem. A UN staff officer in Bosnia observed that "at last count there were 17 Serbian, Muslim, and Croatian factions fighting each other...Each of these groups



pursues a different agenda."<sup>31</sup> Irregular forces normally operate in clandestine fashion, rarely cooperate with other like formations for any sustained period of time, are suspicious and even hostile of outsiders, and are notorious for their inability to make agreements, much less to keep them.<sup>32</sup> Bringing these forces under central control will be especially difficult.

Certain types of military power will be hampered. It is doubtful that air power in a conflict such as this will be decisive; it is extremely difficult to find artillery pieces from the air, much less to destroy them, and small concentrations of men and pack animals are virtually invisible to aircraft. Helicopters are more suited to combat in these conditions, but are also far more vulnerable to surface-to-air missiles and small arms fire. Air cover will be affected adversely by rough terrain and poor weather, artillery and air power are virtually useless against mortars, and all forces will be exposed to snipers, mines, and terrorist attacks.

An implicit risk in using military force in the Balkans is the specter of escalation. Airplanes may be shot down or drivers and escorts may be killed; both are easy to envisage. The terrain in much of Bosnia favors guerrilla activity, and relatively simple disruption tactics employed by armed ethnic paramilitary partisans using portable surface-to-air missiles, mortars, machine guns, and rocket launchers could produce unacceptable levels of casualties, as well as invite retaliatory escalation. The U.S. response may be muted, an acceptance of

deaths and tragedies as being the cost of doing business. But what if a U.S. contingent is massacred? What is to be the response? As in Lebanon, "We're out of here," or "We'll teach them a lesson..."?

#### Means

As we have seen, even seemingly limited objectives, such as providing safe passage or protection to humanitarian relief columns destined for besieged cities, could require a tremendous expenditure of resources, and many objectives would require some commitment of military force. The estimate of the means and scale of effort required is extremely important.

The conflict in Bosnia is an internal war, and "a fundamental asymmetry inevitably prevails between external powers and direct participants in that war."<sup>33</sup> The asymmetry in this case is of will, not of power. Historical animosities drive the internal combatants; their war is not a limited one. While external actors may classify their participation as limited, local opponents perceive the struggle as one for independence and survival, and conduct it in an all-out fashion. For any American soldier deployed there, Colin Powell's wry observation is particularly applicable: "Such distinctions as limited and all-out war mean little to a soldier who is clutching the ground while bullets whiz by his ears."<sup>34</sup>

The United States would do well to note Clausewitz's observation:

Since war is not an act of senseless passion  
but is controlled by its political object,

the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for it in magnitude and also in duration. Once the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace must follow.<sup>35</sup>

The danger in Bosnia is that the United States and other external actors may well find that the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, especially the further that objective is removed from vital national interests.

Some commentators have begun to compare the dangers of U.S. involvement in the Balkans with the war in Vietnam. The threat of a lengthy, inconclusive, and potentially divisive war in a region with limited U.S. interests is an alarming prospect. Additionally, this is occurring in an environment of shrinking military forces and budgets. One analyst warns of ambitious ends out of synch with feeble means, and charges that "expanding our diplomatic objectives while cutting back our power can only be called voodoo national security policy."<sup>36</sup>

#### Spillover: Scenarios for Disaster

There are several potentially disastrous scenarios in which fighting may erupt inside one country and spread quickly to adjacent countries. Once the fighting spreads outside one nation and into another, the conflict threatens to become open-ended. The interests of the new combatant nation must now be considered, and new external actors' interests considered. While the following scenarios are certainly not the only scenarios, they serve to illustrate the interrelationship of interests of the many actors throughout the region.

In the north, Serbia cracks down on the Hungarian minority in the province of Vojvodina. Fighting erupts, and support for the Hungarians in the form of weapons and supplies flows in from Hungary. Serbia responds with air strikes on selected Hungarian targets, and Hungary mobilizes. The Hungarian minority in Romania affirms support for its brethren in Serbia, and make demands of their own on the Romanian government. The Romanian government responds with a military crackdown, and Hungary appeals to the CSCE and UN for military intervention and humanitarian support of oppressed Hungarian minorities in Serbia and Romania.

Potentially the most explosive scenario centers in Kosovo.<sup>17</sup> Serbia initiates a massive civil and military crackdown in Kosovo, including ethnic cleansing actions throughout Kosovo. Streams of ethnic Albanians flee to Albania and Macedonia, and an active resistance movement is set up. Serbia launches military actions in both Albania and Macedonia to counter these forces, and Albania appeals to Turkey to send forces to protect the territorial integrity of Albania in accordance with the new Turkish-Albanian defense treaty, and to secure the independence of Kosovo as an ethnic Albanian Muslim state in accordance with overwhelming popular demand. Greece, allying immediately with Serbia, violently objects to Turkish intervention, and attacks southern Albania to liberate oppressed Greeks in Vorio Epirus, and mobilizes its forces "in defense" along the Turkish border. Ethnic Albanians in Macedonia declare independence from

Macedonia, and Bulgaria immediately announces the formation of "Greater Bulgaria" and annexes the remainder of Macedonia.

A third scenario shifts the beginning of a conflict outside Serbia's borders into Macedonia, and retains many of the feature of the Kosovo scenario. Serbs in Macedonia (about 50,000) demand independence from Macedonia, and ask for Serb intervention to restore "Southern Serbia" to the rump Yugoslav federation. Fighting breaks out between Serbs and Macedonians, and spreads quickly to the Albanian minority. Albania requests Turkey to intervene in Macedonia on behalf of the Muslim Albanians, and Turkey sends forces into Macedonia. Greece declares support for Serbia, mobilizes forces along its Turkish border, and attacks southern Albania to free Vlorë Epirus. Bulgaria declares "Greater Bulgaria," and enters the fight against Greece and Serbia. Serbia meanwhile moves into Kosovo while world attention is focused on Macedonia, and brutally suppresses the Albanians there. Russia blocks any United Nations actions which might punish Serbia, and calls for all foreign powers to withdraw.

Any of these scenarios threatens to escalate the current conflict to a dangerous level. It is clearly in the U.S. interest to prevent Turkey or Greece from being drawn into the Balkan war because of the threat of undermining NATO and other European integrative institutions. Any spread of the fighting to adjoining states threatens to introduce new external interests and relationships which could in turn ignite and spread.

## CONCLUSION

This could well be a defining moment in the post-cold war world, for if no action is taken here, "there is not going to be any order to the new world order," as Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn., observed.<sup>38</sup> In a speech on the floor of the United States Senate in August 1992, he summarized the need for decisive American action:

What we say is that in the interest of our stature as the moral leader of the world, in the interest of the security of a world post-cold-war, in the interest of avoiding a wider conflict in Europe in which Mr. and Mrs. America - more Americans would be drawn in, this is the time for the measured use of force.<sup>39</sup>

The real danger facing the United States in formulating a response to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia is that public passion is clouding national interests, particularly in regard to the commitment of military force. Military force should be a policy tool of last resort, and should be reserved for securing those interests considered most vital to the nation. Public moral outrage directed at uncivilized behavior may be commendable, but it dissipates quickly at the sight of American coffins. As one national weekly observed, "a policy of indiscriminate global interventionism guided only by sentiment, undisciplined by military reality or national interest...would be a formula for disaster."<sup>40</sup>

While the interests of the U.S. lie in the stability of Europe, there are other states in Europe who have interests which may outweigh their desire for stability. These interests include

ethnic, religious, and historic ties or relationships between these actors and internal factions or states involved in the Balkan conflict. External intervention by any of these powers threatens to widen the conflict by spreading it outside the current boundaries.

The suggestion that American leadership is now on the line should not be taken lightly. However, while it may be true that the United States "is the one nation with the moral authority and military strength to provide leadership at the United Nations for stronger international coalition efforts to enforce peace,"<sup>41</sup> it does not necessarily follow that the United States must commit military forces. There is danger in committing military forces in the pursuit of marginal national interests.

The conflict in the Balkans has been described as a political, diplomatic, and military quagmire. There is no political solution on the horizon which is acceptable to all parties. The recent atrocities committed by all parties have left open, festering wounds in the body politic, for which there is no political or diplomatic balm.

The world demands a ceasefire, but does not recognize that this is not a solution to the conflict but merely an absence of open warfare. An extended ceasefire is unacceptable because it threatens to solidify the status quo, which is surely unacceptable to some faction or another. As one observer noted, "Even if every gun fell silent tomorrow, the ceasefire map would look like a leopard crossed with a zebra."<sup>42</sup> The combatants are

hopelessly intermingled.

There may well be U.S. national interests at stake in the Balkans, but these interests are more potential than actual, and do not intuitively translate into political objectives which require the commitment of U.S. military forces to secure. If national leadership chooses to resort to military force to defend perceived U.S. interests, the nation has a right to demand a clear statement of these interests and their associated political objectives, and a sound military strategy which secures the national interests at stake.

Put bluntly, there is presently no compelling national interest requiring or justifying the use of military force in the Balkans, nor is there any remote chance of a quick and decisive military success which would solve the problems of those warring nations. The commitment of U.S. troops to Bosnia would be a tragedy, and one which could well usher in a new era of isolationism following the inevitable disillusionment and discontent which would result from a remote war in a distant land devoid of strategic national interest.



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>F. Stephen Larrabee, "Long Memories and Short Fuses," International Security 15 (Winter 1990/91): 66.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh Poulton, "Rising Ethnic Tension in Vojvodina," RFE/RL Research Reports 1 (18 December 1992): 22.

<sup>3</sup>Milan Andrejevich, "The Sandzak: The Next Balkan Theater of War?" RFE/RL Research Report 1 (27 November 1992): 26, 33.

<sup>4</sup>Patrick Moore, "Kosovo Could Spark Another Balkan War," RFE/RL Research Report 1 (18 December 1992): 18-19.

<sup>5</sup>Duncan M. Perry, "Macedonia: A Balkan Problem and a European Dilemma," RFE/RL Research Report 1 (19 June 1992): 35, 37.

<sup>6</sup>Momir Stojkovic, "Neighbouring Countries and the Yugoslav Crisis," Review of International Affairs, Belgrade XLIII (Oct-Dec 1992): 12.

<sup>7</sup>Louis Zanga, "Albania Afraid of War Over Kosovo," RFE/RL Research Report 1 (20 November 1992): 20.

<sup>8</sup>Poulton, op. cit., 25.

<sup>9</sup>Franz-Lothar Altmann, "Ex-Yugoslavia's neighbours: who wants what?" The World Today 48 (August/September 1992): 163.

<sup>10</sup>Altmann, op. cit., 164.

<sup>11</sup>Altmann, op. cit., 164.

<sup>12</sup>Patrick Moore, "Islamic Aspects of the Yugoslav Crisis," RFE/RL Research Report 1 (10 July 1992): 40.

<sup>13</sup>"Peacemongers," The Economist, 6 February 1993, 53.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted in Suzanne Crow, "Russia's Response to the Yugoslav Crisis," RFE/RL Research Report 1 (24 July 1992): 35.

<sup>15</sup>Richard H. Ullman, Securing Europe (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991): 28.

<sup>16</sup>Larrabee, op. cit., 87.

<sup>17</sup>Francois Heisbourg, "Letters - Serbs as winners," The Economist, 22 August 1992, 6.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>19</sup>Poulton, op. cit., 25.

<sup>20</sup>Barbara Harff, "Bosnia and Somalia: Strategic, Legal, and Moral Dimensions of Humanitarian Intervention," Report from the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy 12 (Summer/Fall 1992): 4.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>22</sup>Stephen John Stedman, "The New Interventionists," Foreign Affairs, 72 (1992/1993), 3.

<sup>23</sup>Peter W. Rodman, "Intervention and Its Discontents," National Review, 29 March 1993, 28.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>25</sup>Michael G. Roskin, remarks before the Atlantic Council, 19 January 1993, Washington D.C.

<sup>26</sup>Christopher C. Joyner, "When Human Suffering Warrants Military Action," The Chronicle of Higher Education, 27 January 1993, A52.

<sup>27</sup>Stedman, 9.

<sup>28</sup>Josef Joffe, "Bosnia: The Return of History," Commentary 94 (October 1992): 29.

<sup>29</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, On War, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 579.

<sup>30</sup>Boutros Boutros-Ghali, speech delivered at the London Conference on Yugoslavia, Review of International Affairs, Belgrade XLIII (September 1992): 14.

<sup>31</sup>Moore, "Islamic Aspects of the Yugoslav Crisis," op. cit., 37.

<sup>32</sup>Boutros-Ghali, op. cit., 13.

<sup>33</sup>Todd R. Greentree, The United States and the Politics of Conflict in the Developing World, Center Paper of the Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs, ed. Michael Vlahos, no. 4 (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1990), 23.

<sup>34</sup>Colin L. Powell, "U.S Forces: Challenges Ahead," Foreign Affairs 71 (Winter 1992/93): 37.

<sup>35</sup>Clausewitz, op. cit., 92.

<sup>36</sup>Rodman, op. cit., 29.

<sup>37</sup>Patrick Moore, "Kosovo Could Spark Another Balkan War," RFE/RL Research Report 1 (18 December 1992): 19.

<sup>38</sup>Congress, Senate, Senator Lieberman of Connecticut speaking on behalf of a resolution relating to authorization of multilateral action in Bosnia-Herzegovina under article 42 of the United Nations Charter before the Senate, S. Res. 330, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess., Congressional Record (10 August 1992), vol. 138, S11993.

<sup>39</sup>Senator Lieberman, op. cit., S11993.

<sup>40</sup>"Savage Wars of Peace," National Review, 18 January 1993, 11.

<sup>41</sup>Congress, Senate, Enforcement of United Nations Security Council Resolutions Calling for the Cessation of Hostilities in the Former Territory of Yugoslavia, 102nd Congress, 2nd sess., S.R. 306, Congressional Record, vol. 138, no. 84, daily ed. (12 June 1992), S8134.

<sup>42</sup>"The fight goes on," The Economist, 26 September 1992, 54.

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